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AUTHOR Anderson, Joy R.; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a study that evaluated a program in which students' reading and writing skills improved with the enhancement of various interventions related to reading and writing. The targeted population consisted of elementary students enrolled in first and third grades in northern Illinois. The lack of reading and writing success was identified through previous testing scores, teacher observations, and student work. Skills, confidence, hesitancy in spelling words, and availability of materials in students' home environments contributed to the problem. Additional causes included time spent watching television and playing electronic games, as well as lack of parent valuing of literacy. Further review indicated that reading and writing were taught in isolation within the curricula. A review of solution strategies combined with an analysis of the problem setting resulted in a comprehensive plan (including writing assessment, portfolios, and checklists for reading and writing) that increased the quality and quantity of reading and writing instruction. Post intervention data indicated an improvement in reading and writing success. (Contains 29 references, and 4 tables and 18 figures of data. Appendixes present survey instruments, checklists, and report forms.) (Author/RS)

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STRUCTURING THE READING AND WRITING PROCESS TO IMPROVE STUDENT SUCCESS

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master's of Arts in Teaching and Leadership

Saint Xavier University & IRI/Skylight

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Action Research Project
Site: Rockford, Illinois
Submitted: April 30, 1996

Joy R. Anderson
Marquette Elementary
Machesney Park, Illinois

Stephanie Fuhr
Windsor Elementary
Loves Park, Illinois

Mary Jo Olson
Clark Elementary
South Beloit, Illinois

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SIGNATURE PAGE

This project was approved by

Sara Mason and Patricia E. Wengrow
Advisor

Priscilla Hartwig Ed. D.
Advisor

Terry Sterling, Ph. D.
Dean, School of Education

Abstract

Authors: Joy Anderson
Stephanie Fuhr
Mary Jo Olson

Site: Rockford 5

Date: February 1, 1996

Title: Improving reading and writing skills for students with reading and writing interventions

This report describes a program in which students reading and writing skills improved with the enhancement of various interventions related to reading and writing. The targeted population consisted of elementary students enrolled in first and third grades, located in Northern Illinois. The problem of reading and writing success was identified through previous testing scores, teacher observations, and student work.

Skills, confidence, hesitancy in spelling words, and availability of materials in students home environments contributed to the problem. Additional causes included time spent watching television and playing electronic games, as well as, lack of parent valuing of literacy. Further review indicated that reading and writing were taught in isolation within the curricula.

A review of solution strategies suggested by knowledgeable others, combined with an analysis of the problem setting, has resulted a comprehensive plan that increased the quality and quantity of reading and writing instruction.

Post intervention data indicated an improvement in reading and writing success.

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Chapter 1

PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

General Statement of Problem

The students of the targeted elementary grades (1 & 3) exhibit reading difficulties. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes standardize testing (Stanford or Iowa Test of Basic Skills), workbooks, journals, observation checklists, and assessments that indicate student performance.

Immediate Problem Context

The setting of the first school, labeled School A, includes a total enrollment of 517 students in a kindergarten through third grade program. The majority of the student population is White with a nine percent minority that includes Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Pacific Islander. School A has a low-income population of 18 percent. This population consists of students from families receiving public aid, living in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, being supported in foster homes with public funds, or being eligible to receive free or reduced-price lunches. The attendance for School A is 95 percent with no chronic truancy and a student mobility of 21 percent (State School Report Card, 1994).

The professional staff of School A is 100 percent White with an average of 13 years of experience in the teaching field. Out of the 28 teachers at School A, 36 percent have earned a master's degree in education. School A also employs support staff of a special education aide and a bilingual aide.

School A houses 5 third grade classrooms, 5 second grade classrooms, 6 first grade classrooms, 3 kindergarten classes, 2 transitional classes (one each for first and second grades), a self-contained special education classroom, Chapter 1 classes, four Reading Recovery classes, a Special Education Resource class, and various special classes of art, music, physical education and learning center. School A contains all self-contained classrooms with team teaching at the second and third grade level. Students of School A have 135 minutes of special classes a week. An average of 20 first grade students is serviced by Reading Recovery and an average of 20 second and third grade students attends Chapter 1 classes. Special services are given to 30 students by two Special Education teachers. School A's Special Education Team also includes a social worker, a school psychologist, a speech and language teacher, and a related services professional.

Targeted Elementary School B has a total enrollment of 413 students in a Kindergarten through Sixth grade program. The majority of the student population is White with a four percent minority, which includes Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American. School B has 17 percent of students from low-income families who receive free or reduced price lunches or public aid. The rate of attendance is 95 percent with no chronic truancy (State School Report Card, 1994).

Targeted Elementary School B employs 28 full-time and 3 part-time certified teachers. This staff has an average of 17 years teaching experience with 45 percent having a master's degree. School B also employs support staff, which includes, one secretary, three paraprofessionals, and five general program aides. The staff is 100 percent White.

School B services ten Trainable Mentally Handicapped (TMH) students in a self-contained environment. The school also has one inclusion student at

the intermediate level. A social worker, a school psychologist, a speech and language teacher, and a resource teacher service students with individual needs. One hearing impaired student, who is at the primary level, receives the services of an aide for one hour per day. Art, physical education, music, and learning center programs are included in the students' weekly schedule. An average of 12 first grade students, throughout the school year, completes the Reading Recovery program. Since Reading Recovery services first grade students, Chapter 1 meets the needs of at-risk students in kindergarten and second grade. The second and third grade classrooms are establishing computer programs of reading, writing, and math into the curriculum. School B contains all self-contained classrooms with some team teaching at the intermediate level. The principal of School B is new to the building, coming from an administrative position at a junior high school level. He was chosen by a committee of staff from School B, which was led by the district's assistant superintendent.

Targeted School District C formed in 1859 as a grade school district. High school was added in 1913. Today targeted School C is one of four buildings: high school, junior high school, middle school, and elementary school. Total district population is 857 students (Hayes, 1967).

Targeted Elementary School C has a population of 293 students and serves grades pre-kindergarten to third. Student racial/ethnic background includes 84 percent White, 6 percent Black, 9 percent Hispanic, and 1 percent Asian. Twenty three and three tenths percent of the students are from low-income families, with 62 students receiving free or reduced-priced lunches. Attendance rate is 95 percent with 8 chronic truant students. Average class size is 24 students (State School Report Card, 1994).

Targeted Elementary School C employs 11 full-time teachers and 5 part-time teachers. Average years of teaching experience for teachers at School C is 12 years and 27 percent of the teachers have a master's degree. The staff is 96 percent White and 4 percent Black. School C shares the physical education, art, and music staff with the middle school. School C is served by Winnebago County Special Education Co-op. School C has two physical handicapped inclusion children. Special Education serves 19 students. Chapter 1 serves 37 students in a reading pull-out program. First grade has a Reading Recovery Program that works with a one-on-one concept. School C employs six aides and five support staff members.

School C is an older, one story, brick building that has 16 classrooms and a multipurpose room. It is sitting in the middle of town on three acres of land and has a large playing field and two playgrounds.

School C offers physical education classes to grades one through three, four times a week for 25 minutes per session. Music is offered twice a week for 28 minutes per session. Art is offered once a week for 48 minutes per session. School C contains all self-contained classrooms. Teachers are responsible for instruction of reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies. Teachers' responsibilities also include instruction of computers and guidance lessons within the classroom. Classes are scheduled weekly in the library for story time and book check out.

Community Setting

School A and B are located in the same district (District AB) in the Northern Illinois area covering 33 square miles. District AB has an area population of 28,453 with a median age of 31 years. The racial makeup of the district includes 96 percent White, 2 percent Hispanic, 1 percent Black, 1

percent Asian, and a small margin of Native American descent. This district serves 13,153 households, of which 8,166 are owned by the occupant with a median home price of $58,100. The average rent of a household is $354 per month with an average number of five rooms.

The educational levels of the people who are 25 years and older in District AB are: 78 percent high school graduates, and 9 percent college graduates. Total household yearly income of residents averages $35,727. Six percent of the household incomes fall below poverty level with an unemployment rate of 4 percent.

The operating expenditures for District AB are $4,798 per student, which is approximately $780 less than the state average. The district average for teaching salaries is $37,190 compared with the state average of $39,545. Due to state law offering early retirement for teachers, a large portion of staff retired. This opened over 50 positions for new staff, many of whom are recent graduates.

District AB began in 1910 as a combination of four school communities in order to save money. District AB currently employs its eighth superintendent. District AB's enrollment is 6,306 students, and it employs 348 teachers whose racial background is primarily White, with a small percentage of Asian background. District AB has 73 percent female and 27 percent male employees. District AB has one high school consisting of tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students; one junior high housing seventh, eighth, and ninth grade students; and eight elementary schools, two of which are magnet schools. To compete with technological advances, a technical school is being established to teach the students who are in ninth through twelfth grades. District AB has a variety of other innovative programs including Early Childhood, Reading Recovery, At-Risk, Gifted, Arts, Transitional, and Vocational.

School District C is located in the upper north-east corner of Winnebago County. It covers seven square miles and is surrounded by one neighboring high school district and borders the Illinois-Wisconsin state line. School District C area has a population of 4,072 with a median age of 34 years. Racial backgrounds include 89 percent White, 5 percent Black, 5 percent Hispanic, and .5 percent Asian and .5 percent American Indian. There are 1,672 households within the district including an excess of 250 mobile homes. Median home price is $37,530 and over half of the homes were constructed before 1959. A large percent of the school population are renters paying a median rent of $273. A sizeable number of households have no father living with the family. Town C area has a 64 percent high school graduate or higher education rate and only a 5 percent of the population have a bachelor's degree or higher (Blackhawk Development Commission, 1990).

Targeted School Area C is a blue collar working community offering industry, manufacturing, trade and service type jobs with an 9 percent unemployment rate. A majority of workers fall in the operator/mover/labor occupation. Median household income is $27,120 and 19 percent of the households are below poverty levels (U. S. Census, 1990).

School District C spends $4,595 per child, which is about $1,000 below the state's average. In 1991, a referendum passed for a $.95 raise in the Education Fund. There was a 50 percent change in staff in 1994-1995 due to early retirement and resignations. The average teacher's salary is $27,513. Over the past four years, two superintendents and six principles have resigned. Students' underachievement for the district comes from bad attitudes about education and students coming unprepared for first grade (Meek, 1995). School C has a 22 percent student mobility with a high percent of the new

enrollment needing special services. School C has enrolled several families that do not speak any English, thus a bilingual aide was hired.

Targeted School District C has been on the Illinois State School Watch list for four years. The expenditures exceed the budget. There are not enough tax dollars to cover expenses. Community C and School C tried to fix the tax base by creating an industrial park annexed to Community C. However, the tax dollars went to the neighboring school as ordered by court. School C has an active Parent Teacher Organization (P.T.O.) that works with the community. Parent volunteers work at the book fairs, school carnival and craft show. They have monthly meetings and school children are invited to put on a program for the parents. The P.T.O. raises funds all year round that help support the curriculum and projects at school. School C benefits from the support and efforts of the parents; however, School District C suffered greatly from the loss of tax revenue and remains on the watch list.

National Context

Merina (1995, p. 4) states, "Across the country, there are 90 million adults who can't read at a fifth grade level. Forty million of them can barely read or write at all." According to Merina, the children of these functionally illiterate adults are twice as likely to become illiterate themselves. This prevalent problem is producing intergenerational illiterate members of society. Children have difficulty developing reading behaviors when they are not modeled at home. The trickle down effect of illiteracy is producing members of a society who cannot fill out job applications. McPike (1992) notes that a huge number of students are leaving school, whether as dropouts or graduates, with such low levels of achievement that their employment prospects are very poor. America is quickly losing competitive ground in the global economy. This problem is so

widespread that it affects everyday communications such as writing a letter, making a grocery list, taking a phone message, and looking up a number in the telephone book, let alone reading to their child, therefore recycling the problem.

Since parents are the most important teachers in a child's life, what parents do for their child is important for their academic success (Mavrogenes, 1990). Nationally, illiteracy enters into the school situation as these parents enroll their children. Most illiterate parents tend to shy away from school activities dealing with writing and reading. Even school communications are not read or returned. Teachers are perceived as intimidating because they are seen as professionals who have an expertise that parents do not have. Illiterate low-income families do have the desire to help their children to become educated; however, they lack the confidence and the knowledge themselves (Mavrogenes, 1990). Parental apathy is not the problem, but a cyclical trend of failure is reproducing itself.

Even some teachers in our profession are not providing stimulating activities to promote literacy. Teachers frequently use workbooks, dittos, blackboard seatwork, and isolated exercises dealing with parts of language, rather than open-ended, thought-provoking, and meaningful activities in a holistic approach. The research of Clements, Nastasi, and Swaminathan (1993) showed that children using only drill-and-practice programs had significant losses in creativity. Conformity is encouraged by teachers within daily assignments instead of the creativity and diversity of thought provided by expressing language in written form. To achieve higher order thinking skills, teachers need to provide more meaningful activities that include speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills (Early Childhood and Literacy Development Committee of the International Reading Association, 1986).

Traditionally, schools have taught children to read and then have taught them skills to write. But when teachers observe children learning on their own, we see a different sequence in their approach to literacy. We notice, as did Rudolph and Cohen (1984), that 'comprehension precedes speech; speech precedes writing; and writing is grasped before reading' (Fields, Spangler, & Lee, 1991).

Mooney (1990) correlates the development of reading with writing. This development of reading begins with the child's understanding that written print is the same as oral language. Mooney connects the development of reading in meaning based writing, relating this to the development of spoken language of an infant. Walton (1989) states that research supports these same beliefs that children grow in their reading and writing in the same way that they develop their language.

For children to succeed in school, they need to come to school ready to learn. External factors can impede their ability for a good start. Yet, each child needs to take responsibility for his/her own education. Motivation and determination need to come from not only parents and teachers, but from within the child. Students must apply themselves to all areas of education, including writing skills. Frank Miller, South Beloit Superintendent, stated, "We have very many children not achieving - only ten percent of our students are in the top quartile. We have kids with bad attitudes. We have kids who finish a 45-minute test in five minutes because they just made a design with the dots" (Meek, 1995, p. 2). If students lack the motivation, they are missing key building blocks of knowledge, which only compound throughout each school year.

Nationally, more than one-fourth of teenagers drop out of school. According to one study, these high school dropouts cost the nation more than $240 billion a year in lost earnings and forgone taxes (Sullivan,

1991, p. 5). Gage (1990) says that dropping out means less earning power. In 1986, male workers over age twenty-five who had completed four years of high school had a median annual income of $24,701; those with only some high school earned $20,000, or twenty percent less (Burke, 1992, p. xxi).

Students have to realize that reading has meaning for life survival. They have to become literate adults in order to function in today's competitive society.

Chapter 2

PROBLEM EVIDENCE AND PROBABLE CAUSE

Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of student success in reading and writing, a parent survey, anecdotal records consisting of students' writing ability, and student attitude surveys were noted over a four week period of time.

Out of the 69 parents, 60 parents were surveyed, representing 87 percent responding. A parent survey was developed by the researchers (Appendix A) to aid in the recording process. A summary of the responses in percentages is presented in table one.

Table 1
Percentage of Parents Surveyed
September 1, 1995 through September 12, 1995

Questions	School A						School B						School C					
#1 Do you read to your child at home?	Yes				No		Yes				No		Yes				No	
	100				0		86				14		100				0	
#1A If so, how much time do you spend in minutes per day?	0-5	5-10	10-15	15+			0-5	5-10	10-15	15+			0-5	5-10	10-15	15+		
	11	28	44	17			20	20	40	20			10	40	25	25		
#2 Does your child read independently?	Yes				No		Yes				No		Yes				No	
	39				61		95				5		65				35	
#2A If so, how much time does your child spend per week?	0-10	10-20	20-30	30+			0-10	10-20	20-30	30+			0-10	10-20	20-30	30+		
	29	29	29	14			14	29	29	29			47	39	7	7		
#3 Estimate the number of children's books at home.	0-10	10-20	20-30	30+			0-10	10-20	20-30	30+			0-10	10-20	20-30	30+		
	0	17	22	61			0	5	9	86			0	15	30	55		
#4 What types of materials do you read?	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
	0	57	11	11	14	0	6	5	24	17	23	11	5	17	5	25	20	23	18	7	2
#5 Do you go to the library and checkout books?	Yes				No		Yes				No		Yes				No	
	53				47		82				18		30				70	
#5A If so, how often?	Weekly	Bi-Monthly	Monthly	Other			Weekly	Bi-Monthly	Monthly	Other			Weekly	Bi-Monthly	Monthly	Other		
	10	10	80	0			0	17	44	39			17	33	0	50		
#6 Which of the following do you have in your home?	TV	Electronic Games	VCR	Comp	Board Games		TV	Electronic Games	VCR	Comp	Board Games		TV	Electronic Games	VCR	Comp	Board Games	
	100	67	100	22	94		100	73	95	23	91		100	65	85	10	75	

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Parent responses have shown that all first grade parents read to their children, while the parents of the third grade students indicate that these readers are more independent. Two-thirds of the people responding report reading to their children between 5-15 minutes per day. School A and B have the largest percentage response in the 10-15 minute range, while School C's largest percentage was in the 5-10 minute range. This does not indicate that School C reads less frequently, but only for a shorter period of time. The School C researcher notes that the library books go home, and many students report that the parents have not read the books to them.

The independent reading question shows the difference between the developmental stages of first and third grade students. Typically, the younger child spends less time reading independently, whereas the older child uses more time to read independently. The data signifies that the lower economic children of School C are reading independently, which is not typical of this socio-economic class. Taking into account that the majority of these first grade students cannot yet identify their letters, these parent responses may be due to how low socio-economic families interpreted this question. The majority of children in School A and C are reading independently for less than 20 minutes per week. In School B, the majority of students are reading independently for more than 10 minutes.

In no case did a parent report having less than 10 books at home. In each home, the majority of the children has 30 or more books at home. The type of materials chosen to be read by adults was overwhelmingly not adult materials, such as newspapers, magazines, and novels. The majority of parents report that they are reading children's books at home. The survey could have been unclear to the parents because of the questioning terminology, and

producing possible inaccurate results. The survey shows a lack of role modeling from adults regarding the importance of life-long reading.

A correlation can be drawn between the number of library visits and the abilities of independent readers, assuming third grade students are more independent readers. The most common response to the number of visits is once or twice a month. Over two-thirds of the students in School C never go to the library, while the students in School A and B have over half of the students who are visiting the library. The data of all the schools indicate divergent responses, and no other correlations can be drawn.

The trend of the parents surveyed shows more passive forms of entertainment, such as televisions, video cassette recorders (VCR), and electronic games, with all families owning at least one of these media devices. Three-fourths of these families report having board games. Less than a fourth of these homes own computers. The ownership of the electronic materials suggests that cost is not necessarily an issue, and possibly has a greater priority than reading media.

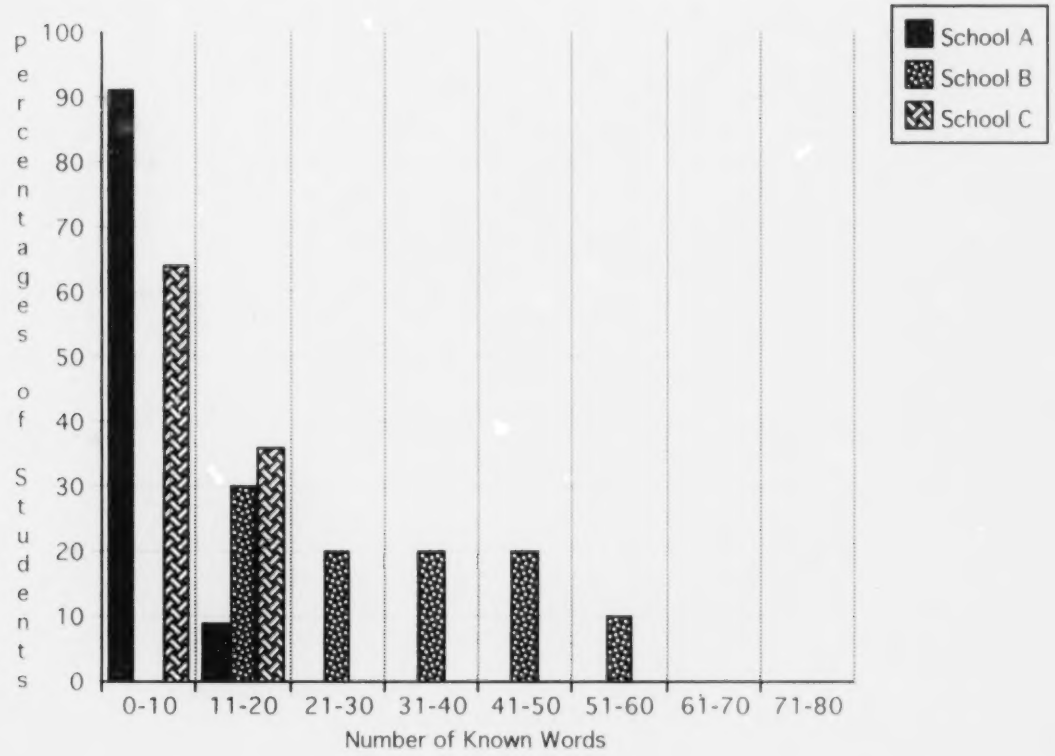

Figure 1
Writing Spree
Percentage of Students Known Words
September 1, 1995

Teacher-scored data attests that older students have a greater knowledge of known words than first grade students. In comparison with first grade, the targeted third grade performs at an average of 30 - 40 known words. The Writing Spree assessment states that at the end of first grade, students should be able to generate 50 words in a 10 minute period. Probable cause for the limited writing skills is obvious for the targeted first and third grade classes since both grade levels scored well below the bench mark score of 50 words obtained at the end of a first grade level. School A tested in a print free environment; therefore, producing a higher percentage of fewer known words. School B and C tested in a regular classroom with print existing. School C had

students who copied words, thus altering the results to appear higher than their actual knowledge. Students from School B were hindered by the print environment, slowing their thinking process to generate known words. The results reflect the developmental levels of emergent writers in comparison with the two differing age levels.

Figures 2-8
Students' Attitudes toward Reading;
Percent Responding
September 19, 1995

#1 I like to read.

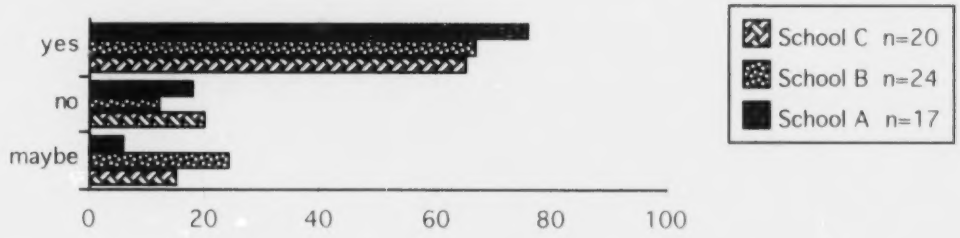

Figure 2

#2 I like my parents and teacher to read to me.

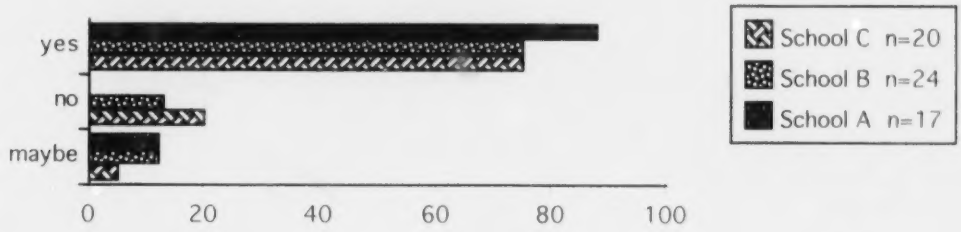

Figure 3

#3 I have a favorite author.

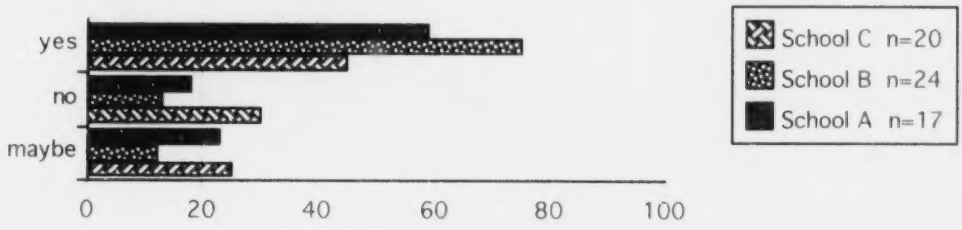

Figure 4

#4 I go to the library.

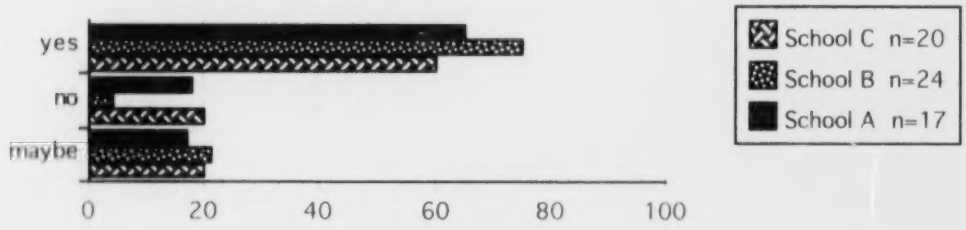

Figure 5

#5 I think reading is important.

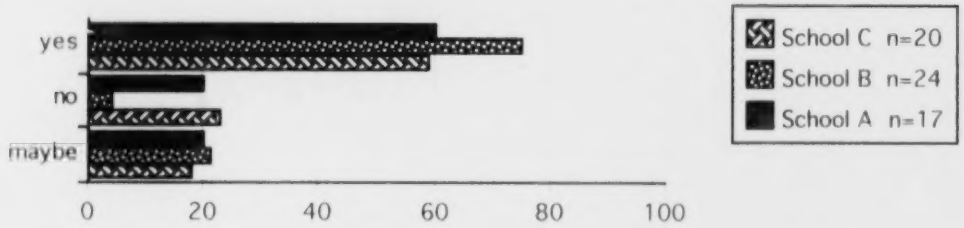

Figure 6

#6 I have books of my own at home.

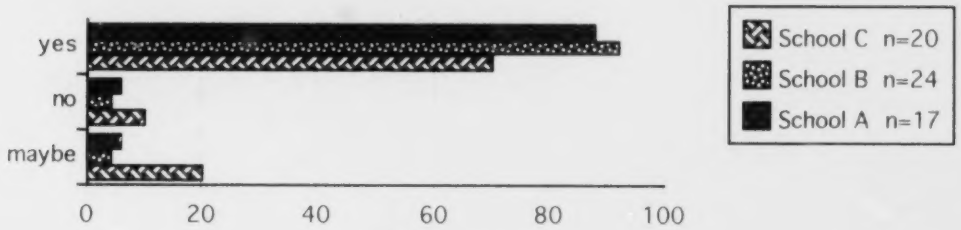

Figure 7

#7 I like to tell others about the books I read.

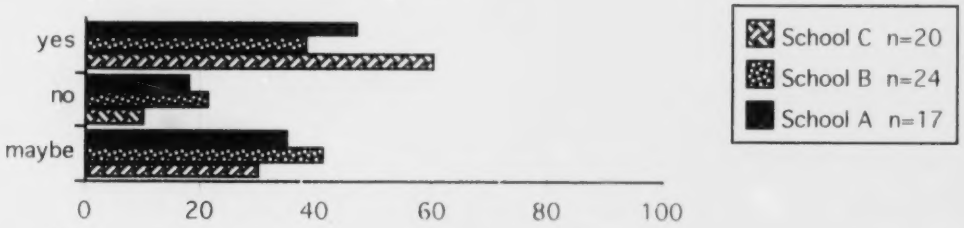

Figure 8

Two-thirds of the students responding in all three schools enjoy reading alone, as well as having adults reading to them. This observation indicates that

the developmental age level does not affect the students' attitudes towards reading. The majority of the targeted third grade students have favorite authors. Targeted first grade students have not had the same amount of exposure to books as the third grade and possibly lack the maturity and the understanding of authors to be able to choose their favorite. Approximately half of the first grade did not identify a favorite author. Two-thirds of first graders and three-fourths of the third graders respond that they visit a library. In comparison with the parent survey, question five, first grade students respond with a significant discrepancy according to the parent report. The data shocked the researchers that one-fourth of the students feel that reading is not important. The majority of students realize that they have books at home, while a small minority of students stated that they do not have books at home. However, all parents reported to having at least 10 books available. Responses were more varied for verbally sharing books with peers. About half of all students enjoy sharing their reading with others, and a third of the students were ambivalent to peer interaction.

Figures 9-14
Students' Attitudes toward Writing;
Percent Responding
September 19, 1995

#1 I like to write.

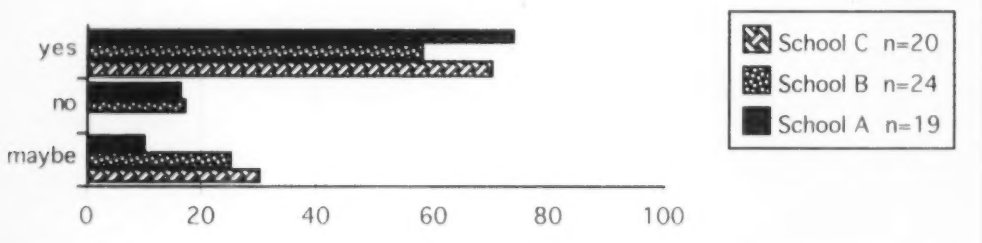

Figure 9

#2 I like to publish my writing.

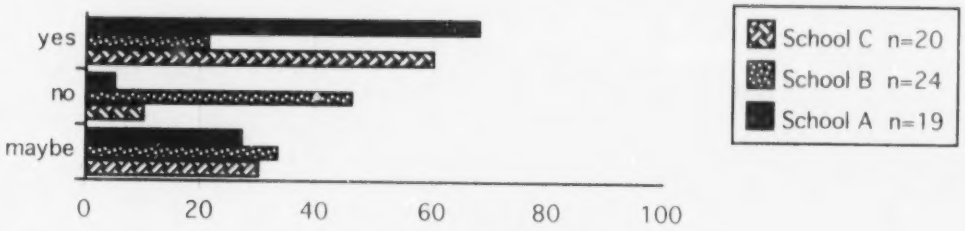

Figure 10

#3 I am a real author.

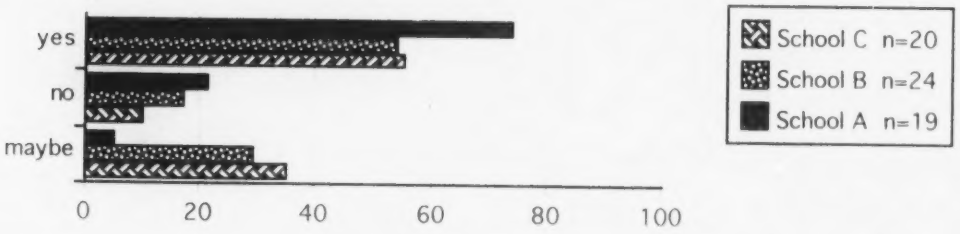

Figure 11

#4 I like to sit on the author's chair and share my writing.

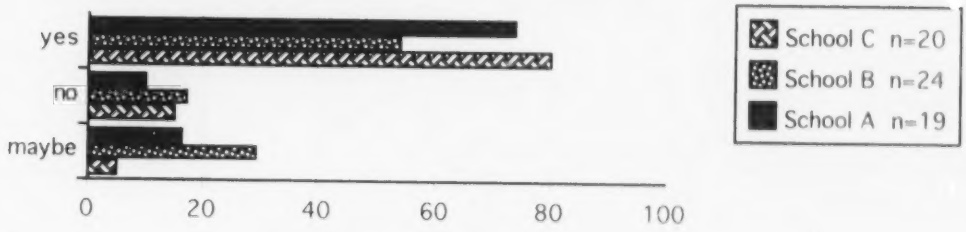

Figure 12

#5 My family likes to read my books.

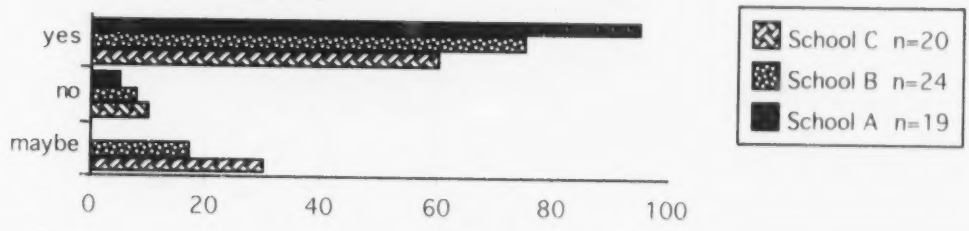

Figure 13

#6 Kids in our class help me write.

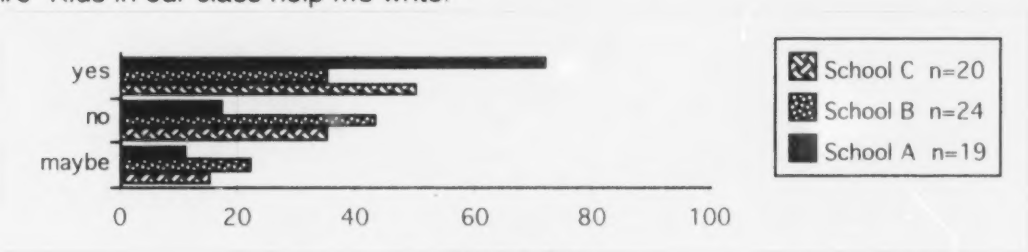

Figure 14

Two-thirds of the students reported that they like to write. First grade responses were at least 10 percentage points higher than third grade responses. Two-thirds of first graders admit to enjoying having their writing published, while less than a third of the older students like their writing published. More than half of all students are confident enough in their writing ability to consider themselves to be real authors. An overwhelming majority of all students enjoy being honored in a chair and sharing their writing. Family interest in the child's writing was rated the highest for School A and B. Students of School C indicated a high percentage of families enjoying their stories, yet this response was significantly less than sharing their stories at school. The researcher of School C feels this may reflect a lack of parental involvement. Younger children respond that they receive more help from their peers; whereas, the older children are becoming more independent writers and a majority responded they did not receive help from their peers.

Probable Causes

In analyzing the context of student responses, parent responses, and students' known written vocabulary, it became apparent that students are deficient in reading and writing success. This deficit in reading and writing success may be multifaceted beginning with the low socio-economic situations of the families. In both communities, approximately two-thirds of individuals have received high school diplomas, and one-third have not; therefore, their

employment opportunities are limited to low paying jobs. With low paying employment levels, money is not available to purchase books or other educational materials. Single parents have even more difficulty in surviving financially. The mobility within these communities negatively affects the student's ability and opportunity to learn. Without the consistency of remaining in one classroom, children are not able to receive the stability needed for learning base knowledge, since every move requires time for adjustment and placement. The breakdown of the traditional family, with both parents working outside the home, results in an inability to provide financially for young children, let alone meet other needs.

All the school researchers have noted a decline of parental involvement and support. The shortage of parental involvement could be due to a lack of patience and confidence in their parenting skills. Parents want to provide more for their child without making any sacrifices. They tend to show deficiencies in positive role modeling; for example, they are too tired to go to the library, to read to their child, or to have personal interactions with their child. Children are spending more time at day care and in front of the television. Parents are working and recreating while the child is at day care for extended periods of time. Children are missing important developmental and emotional needs with their primary caregivers. Even when the parents are with their child, the majority of the interaction time is spent passively. The parent child interaction does not provide quality time due to the parents' responsibilities at home trying to maintain a household. The child spends a great deal of time in front of the television or using electronic games. The growing influence of media exposure may lead to a problem with character and moral development. Television also causes a shorter attention span with these children who are so used to seeing images change instantaneously across the screen.

The question of children's readiness to learn is the final issue. These children are coming into the school environment and are not academically ready for the challenges that school offers. The child has difficulty learning new material without a prior knowledge and experience base. This child has not experienced a positive role model of learning, and the parent does not understand what is required for learning to take place. School A and C have many students who have not learned their letters, and do not have an understanding that print is "talk written down." An increase of student misbehavior has been occurring, along with a decrease of the social skills needed for relating to classmates and school personnel. Even though behavior interferes with learning, teachers need to provide an enriching and stimulating environment for children to achieve academic success. Responsibility lies with the teacher to ensure that school is the best part of a child's day.

Literature has shown that the absence of books at home causes the child to not have success in reading. Many students do not have books at home (Hong, 1995). According to Cullinan and Bagert, activities at home are just as important as school activities. Parents are able to provide experiences that the classrooms cannot. "Children who are read to grow to love books...They remember sharing these times with someone they love, and they anticipate with joy the time when they will be able to read for themselves" (Cullinan and Bagert, 1993). Research also stresses the importance of parents being consistent and patient while working with their children, preparing them to succeed as a reader. A variety of books is needed (Cullinan and Bagert, 1993).

Cullinan and Bagert (1993) reported that several experts advocate that children view no more than 10 hours of television each week. Limiting television watching permits more time for reading and writing activities. Hiebert (1991) believes that fantasy can help teachers win their students away from

television. Television's ability to create and deliver a total sensory experience gives television its tremendous power over our children that is unparalleled and unbeatable. "'A book,' Ezra Pound once said, 'should be like a ball of light in the hands.' But that 6-year-old, like too many other children, will probably never experience that light. The television flicker has him charmed" (Hiebert, 1991). Television has unprecedented attention from children; they find it easier to turn on the television than to open a book. Some studies estimate that 85 percent of students arrive at school 'book-naive'; they are seldom or never read to at home. "Whatever the exact figure, the overall trends are clear: There is less reading at home more television watching, and declining literacy" (Hiebert, 1991).

Students can develop the joys books have to offer because they have been read to all their lives by their parents (Hiebert, 1991). However, some children do not have that opportunity because their parents are illiterate. The emphasis on the importance of reading is lost with illiterate parents who believe that they can function in society without the ability to read. "Estimates of the number of functionally illiterate American adults, who read so poorly that they can't cope with the basics of everyday life, are even more shocking. Some figures range up to 60 million - more than one-third of the country's adult population" (Gursky, 1991).

In the 1990's, the schools have felt the impact of dysfunctional families. Schools are providing materials, free lunches, and other things that traditionally were done by parents. Lickona (1993) indicates some prevalent and frightening trends that are becoming almost accepted in today's society:

> Children of marriages that end in divorce and children of single mothers are more likely to be poor, have emotional and behavioral problems, fail to achieve academically, get pregnant, abuse drugs and alcohol, get in

trouble with the law, and be sexually and physically abused. Children in stepfamilies are generally worse off than child in single parent homes. Not only is the family unit a factor, but the socio-economic status of families does affect the lives of children as well. According to Clurman (1995), our society does not value, or even love children. "There are more children living in poverty in this culture than in any other industrialized nation. We've got so many working mothers and no decent child-care system. We don't put our money into children. It's almost scandalous" (Clurman, 1995). Two basic human needs are required; one is to love and connect, and the other is to understand and accept one's identity. A good family is helpful to develop both of these aspects.

Chapter 3

THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

Review of Literature

Reading and writing are not isolated activities. A child's ability to read is enhanced by writing, and a child's writing skills are proportionately increased as their reading ability grows. Children need to be encouraged to read, just as they are encouraged to develop their spoken language (Mooney, 1990). Speaking, listening, reading, and writing are the elements of language development that support and enrich one another (Cullinan and Bagert, 1993). With the plethora of different solutions that many experts dispute over, teachers are faced with making a decision on what is the most effective approach to increasing reading and writing success. The following discussion will review the range of opinions held by the experts in the field of literacy development.

One possible solution to increase reading and writing ability is to implement Whole Language strategies in the classroom. Whole Language is more than just an alternative to traditional teaching methods, it's about empowerment of teachers and students in the classroom. Whole Language combines a variety of philosophies to increase reading and writing ability. The techniques include daily journal writing, student cooperation, letter writing, and silent and oral reading of authentic literature. Whole Language espouses a child-centered atmosphere for learning, which incorporates meaning and relevance to children's lives (Gursky, 1991). Students learn by participating in activities that they find meaningful and by sharing knowledge with their peers.

Regardless of the child's language or background experience, the child is capable of learning to read and write. High expectations are needed for reading and writing to develop. For reading and writing to be extended beyond classroom learning, students need to see these activities as enjoyable and purposeful. Language learning is a lifelong, socially active process that offers interactions in reading, writing, listening and speaking. According to Cullinan and Bagert (1993), these interactions make up language, and each of these elements support and enrich each other. They believe writing will make students better readers. Emphasis needs to be on the process of reading, rather than the product, for authentic learning to take place. According to Routman (1991, p. 18), "Whole Language teaching is about teachers and students who make intelligent choices, think and analyze critically, and choose to go on learning in all areas in their lives." The Whole Language teacher's role shifts from a director to a facilitator, and also becomes a colearner. "As a colearner I do more listening and less talking. I am an observer, encourager, participator, and respondent. I am a coach." (Routman, 1991, p. 18).

One facet of Whole Language is writing. Reading Recovery studies have shown that there is a connection between reading and writing (Pinnell, Fried, & Estice, 1990). When students' experience their very first reading through their own writing, the transcription can be easily read since the print is their own language, and, therefore, the most predictable text of all (Routman, 1991). Writing activities serve not only their own intrinsic value, but also as a foundation for much of the analytical work needed in reading. By doing the writing activities, it provides an opportunity for the child to examine the details of written language, sort out letter sound relationships, search for information, analyze words, use known information, and check his own work (Pinnell, Fried, & Estice, 1990). The student is making written language his own, not by

learning any particular word or sound, but by learning how to use his language of letters, sounds, and words (Pinnell, Fried, & Estice, 1990). "Are children encouraged to write meaningfully about what they read? It is not enough to fill in the blanks on worksheets; the point is to have children think about what they read, relate it to what they already know, and communicate these thoughts to others." (Cullinan and Bagert, 1993, p. 50). According to Pinnell, Fried and Estice (1990), when children read their own writing, they gain more opportunities to closely examine print and letter sound relationships within a context which is familiar and, in turn, very meaningful to them. Various opportunities for students to use their writing skills are daily journal writing, book reports, and book making.

Another possible solution is applying Reading Recovery strategies into classroom practice. This child-based program accepts the student at his developmental level and builds on the competencies instead of the deficits. Reading Recovery uses materials that do not have controlled vocabulary, but are meaningful and enjoyable. The main focus is at the child's strategy level and takes into account the complexities of the reading and writing process. "Children must be assisted to learn the "how to" of the reading process rather than the specific, sequenced bits of information presented in isolated ways" (Pinnell, Fried, & Estice, 1990, p. 294).

To create a balanced reading program, children could also benefit from programs such as book buddies, cross-age reading and independent reading. Less able readers benefit from a shared book experience where they come together and read rich literature and, therefore, feel successful (Routman, 1991). Cross-age reading gives the older child the opportunity to take the leadership role in helping younger peers to feel successful. According to Friedman and Koeppel (1990), cross-age reading increases language and

literacy development. The benefit of cross-age reading is that it is not difficult to develop, it will work, and it is worth collaboration between classrooms (Routman, 1991). Independent reading motivates students to read large volumes of literature because of their freedom to self-select books. According to Barclay and Brenhy (1994), children who make valid choices will be able to assume responsibility of their own knowledge acquisition. For the implementation of book buddies, cross-age reading and independent reading, time is the biggest factor, yet these three programs yield justifiable rewards.

In the futuristic society, the computer enriched classroom will alter reading and writing instruction. Technology has created a phenomena that captivates students in a total sensory experience. However, existing classroom technology does not provide this total sensory experience due to the cost of the technology and other factors limiting use. Several classrooms still have the software that limits creativity and only caters to drill and practice. Studies show that drill and practice software increases reading skills with pre-school and primary grade students, however, using the computer must be done over a long period of time. "Will having the computer in schools allow us to meet children's learning needs in innovative ways, or will it just extend electronically what were poor education practices in the first place?" (Fields, Spangler, & Lee, 1991, p. 306).

Choosing the right software is important as well. Word processing software provides the use of many editing functions, therefore, allowing the students to experiment with written language. Studies also show that problem-solving software improves reading achievement better than reading-drill software. Even though problem-solving software lacks the emphasis on reading, the students still make greater gains with reading, especially for students with low reading achievement (Clements, Nastiasi, and Swaminathan,

1993). Once reading becomes purposeful, whether using technology or traditional methods, students will always acquire higher reading skills over the drill and practice method.

Occasional computer use will not be effective and will not show an improvement in reading skills. The students who used the computer software over several months demonstrated the strongest improvement with their reading skills. Stronger gains were made for the students who had computers in the home as well (Clements, Nastiasi, and Swaminathan, 1993).

Another aspect of technology is television. Many times television is seen as the enemy of education. TV does not allow for reading and listening to be active, personal and imaginative. One hour of TV can not replace a home filled with books and meaningful conversations. Therefore, educators must spark an interest so that students will pick up books instead of passively watching television. TV does not talk to the children and cannot nurture self-esteem or provide meaningful experiences. Students must become thoughtful consumers and critics of media (Fields, Spangler, & Lee, 1991).

Frequently, television is overlooked for educational use. Schools cannot neglect the importance of television's influence over children. According to Hiebert (1991, p. 48), "it has an unparalleled, and seemingly unbeatable, ability to create and deliver a total sensory experience." Educational television programs do exist that are beneficial for children. Sesame Street was developed to provide at-risk children with language rich environment and help with letter identification (Fields, Spangler, & Lee, 1991). Closed-captioned tel[illegible]sion adaptation can also be used with reading instruction. Since television is here to stay, its benefits should be capitalized on in order for technology to work. "Television can be a great tool for education too. The keys are setting limits, making good choices, taking time to watch together,

discussing what you view, and encouraging follow-up reading. (Cullinan and Bagert, 1993, p. 44)

Another solution to increase students' reading and writing ability is having students self-evaluate. Evaluation can be a driving factor with instruction. Metacognition promotes evaluative thinking. Portfolios lend themselves to offering a wonderful visual presentation of a student's capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, accomplishments and progress. "There is an awareness of where the child has been, what steps the child has taken, and a sense of where the child is going" (Batzle, 1992, p.12). Evaluation should be ongoing, focus on the learning objectives, and show growth over time (Routman, 1991).

Like evaluation, Cooperative Learning can be implemented with all of the solutions. When students work together, learning happens in novel ways. Students are able to share ideas, work towards mutually satisfying products, give support to each other, voice their own opinions, and evaluate new information and ideas. Cooperative Learning involves students in their own learning and teaches them how to work with others. It necessitates evaluation of their own methods and products. Students are given a degree of freedom and the responsibility for doing their work. Occasional prodding may be needed to keep them on task and should be done through questioning instead of demanding answers. Challenge students to think through their writing and reading projects. (Walling, 1987).

According to Bellanca and Fogarty (1991), Cooperative Learning is much more powerful than direct instruction. In the place of the teacher as an assembler of knowledge, it now shifts to the teacher as the master craftsman. In order to have this shift, it needs to take place within the entire school community. Students will acquire basic skills and other achievement goals

through Cooperative Learning. Students will benefit more than their own expectations.

The solution approach of this project is a comprehensive implementation of many of these techniques. Using a variety of strategies, students will be able to capitalize on their own learning style and strengths.

Project Outcomes and Solution Components

As the result of writing and reading interventions, during the period of September 1, 1995 to January 31, 1996, the first and third grade students from the targeted classes will increase in reading and writing success, as measured by a published writing assessment (writing spree), a portfolio assessment, and checklists for reading and writing.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. Facilitates independent reading sessions.
2. Promote student writing in personal journal entries.
3. Create book report schedule and implementation.
4. Activate portfolio record collection system.
5. Connect student growth patterns of known words through the use of writing sprees.
6. Provide opportunities to produce creative writing by publication of students' written language.

Action Plan for the Intervention

School A

I. Reading Materials

A. D.E.A.R. (Drop Everything And Read) = Pair & Share

1. Develop
    a. Make a plan to teach social skills
    b. Reading checklist for observation and assessment
2. Collect
    a. Library books for each child in class
    b. Magazines and alternative reading material
    c. Reading basal books for each child
3. Implement
    a. Twice a week after lunch recess for D.E.A.R.
    b. Twice a week during reading class for Pair and Share
    c. Read Drop Everything and Read book to class prior to implementation

B. Book reports and book making
1. Develop
    a. Plan for making a book a week
    b. System for sending home the Reading Recovery books
    c. Checklists monitoring which books students have read
    d. Format for book reports and "take home bags" filled with the materials to complete the projects
    e. Parent letter explaining the procedure
2. Collect
    a. Reading Recovery books and enrichment books from library
    b. Bags for taking the book report supplies home
    c. Yellow envelopes and cover sheet for Reading Recovery books
3. Implement
    a. Send books home on Monday, to be returned on Thursday
    b. Total of two books read per week; one to be a book report

c. Class time of sharing book reports once a month

C. Implement reading recovery strategies

1. Develop

a. Assessment time schedules to evaluate reading progress

b. Checklists to record student progress

2. Collect

a. Writing books bound with 50 pages

b. Posters with unknown word strategies

c. Running Record sheets for recording

3. Implement

a. Teaching strategies for unknown words to students

b. Teaching the usage of sound and letter boxes in writing words

II. Writing Materials

A. Journal

1. Develop

a. Writing starters (topics) for the first grade level

b. Plan to respond to journals

c. Develop a rubric for student's self-assessment

2. Collect

a. Bound book for first grade to be able to write in

b. Materials for writing, i.e. markers and special crayons to spark interest

3. Implement

a. Once a week journaling about the week's reflections for 1/2 hour

B. Writing Spree

1. Develop
    a. Bind 15 pages with cover
    b. Checklist with names for scores
2. Collect
    a. Student books
3. Implement
    a. Monthly
    b. Ten minutes
    c. Score number of words and record on checklist

C. Writing Portfolio
1. Develop
    a. Rubric for work chosen - Student Assessment
    b. System for collection and selection process
2. Collect
    a. Samples
    b. File folders for each child to be stored in hanging folders in a Rubbermaid tub
3. Implement
    a. Keep journals in folder
    b. Teacher selected work and student selected work process
    c. Monthly sample handwriting

D. Book reports and book making (See Above)

E. Reading Recovery strategies (See Above)

School B

I. Reading Materials

A. Book Reports

1. Develop

    a. Format including characters, synopsis, and main idea

    b. Rubric for students' self-evaluation

    c. Rubric for teacher evaluation

    d. Set a time for the report, written and orally, to be collected

2. Collect

    a. Library books on various topics (fiction, non-fiction, etc.)

3. Implement

    a. One book report per month

    b. Teacher selected topic per month

    c. Students choose book

    d. Students make visual aid to accompany written report

    e. Students read report orally to class during the assigned day

B. D.E.A.R. (Drop everything and read)

1. Develop

    a. Teacher observation checklist

2. Collect

    a. Library books, magazines, and reading texts

3. Implement

    a. Two times per week

    b. 15 minutes

    c. Student selects book to be read

    d. Teacher observes students for on-task behavior

C. Reading Inventory

1. Develop

    a. Time schedule

b. Student selection of a stratified sample

2. Collect

a. Sample

b. Inventory form

3. Implement

a. Write a paragraph to determine the four students to be observed (one high boy, one low boy, one high girl, one low girl)

b. Observe once a month

c. Teacher observes the four students and takes notes on provided inventory

D. Library Trips

1. Develop

a. Time schedule to visit school and community library

2. Collect

3. Implement

a. Students visit school library once per week

b. Students check out two books per school visit

c. Make a community trip to the library

II. Writing Materials

A. Book Reports

Same as above

B. Portfolios

1. Develop

a. Rubrics for assessment

2. Collect

a. Hanging folders for filing system

b. Teacher-selected assignments

c. Student-selected assignments

3. Implement

a. Each student will have a hanging folder to file his/her samples

b. Selected work will be dated and placed into portfolio

c. Students self assess portfolio once per month

C. Journal Writing

1. Develop

a. Story starters

2. Collect

a. Spiral for each student

3. Implement

a. Write in journal once per week

b. Respond to story starter or reflections of the week

c. Write for 15-20 minutes

d. Write letter to parents every Friday

e. Response to the journal

1. Volunteers read their entries

2. Students share entries with a partner

3. Teacher response to the entries

D. Writing Spree

1. Develop

a. Bind 15 pages with cover

b. Checklist with names for scores

2. Collect

a. Student books

3. Implement

a. Monthly

b. Ten minutes

c. Score number of words and record on checklist

E. Technology

1. Develop

a. Student work folders

2. Collect

a. Computer programs

3. Implement

a. Write to Write program

b. Each student will use the program twice per week

c. One-half hour per session

School C

I. Reading Materials

A. D.E.A.R. = Pair & Share Reading

1. Develop

a. Teacher assigned partner

b. Teach social skills

c. Create a checklist

2. Collect

a. Library books and magazines, reading text

3. Implement

a. Bi-weekly in September

b. 15 minutes per session

c. Choose their own spot in the room

B. Book Reports

1. Develop
    a. Book report format
    b. Book report chart and laminate it
    c. Room library
    d. Set up library check out time with school library
2. Collect
    a. Parent signature slip
    b. Students' reports
3. Implement
    a. Starts in October
    b. Student or Parent reads book
    c. Four books per month
    d. Student fills out book report format
    e. Teacher puts sticker on book report chart for each book
    f. Teacher passes out a reward for every completed month
    g. Child may give one oral book report (optional)

C. Class Book Making

1. Develop
    a. Create format per month
    b. Design a cover and laminate
    c. Create a parent comment sheet
2. Collect
    a. Each child turns in his/her page
3. Implement
    a. Once a month starting in September
    b. One hour session to write and draw page

c. Staple the book

d. Teacher reads the book to the group

II. Writing Materials

A. Journals

1. Develop

a. Bind 20 pages with cover

b. Story Starters and poems or week's reflections

c. Develop a rubric for student's self-assessment

2. Collect

a. Student books

3. Implement

a. Weekly for 1/2 hour time slot

b. Spelling doesn't count (Inventive spelling)

c. Student self-assessment rubrics on a monthly basis

B. Writing Spree

1. Develop

a. Bind 15 pages with cover

b. Checklist with names for scores

2. Collect

a. Student books

3. Implement

a. Monthly

b. Ten minutes

c. Score number of words and record on checklist

C. Writing Portfolio

1. Develop

a. Rubric for work chosen - Student Assessment

2. Collect
   a. Hanging folders and crate for filing system
   b. Samples
3. Implement
   a. Keep journals in folder
   b. Teacher selected work and student selected work
   c. Monthly sample handwriting

D. Book Reports (See Above)

E. Class Book Making (See Above)

F. Program I Can Write All Through the Year (Whole Language Approach)
   1. Develop
      a. Run copies and bind them
   2. Collect
      a. Student Work
   3. Implement
      a. Daily activity
      b. Use "Guess"/Inventive Spelling

Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the effects of the intervention, bimonthly writing sprees will be administered in order to determine growth in the language skills. In addition, portfolios of each student's work will be collected throughout the intervention period. Scoring rubrics and checklists will be developed as part of the assessment process.

Chapter 4

PROJECT RESULTS

Historical Description of Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase reading and writing success. The implementation of writing sprees, portfolios, and checklists for reading and writing were selected to affect the desired success.

Each teacher researcher started the school year with surveying the student family population about reading and writing interests (Appendix A). They were returned anonymously. Due to a slow response, a second copy of the survey was sent out by two of the researchers.

Each of the researchers implemented writing sprees as a form of assessment. Each student was given ten minutes to write as many of their known words as possible in a print free environment. The first grade researchers moved around the room monitoring the progress and giving prompts as stated in the Reading Recovery program. Third grade students performed better without the teacher intervention. The frequency of using the writing sprees in each classroom ranged from bi-monthly to monthly. In School A, the first writing spree was administered one-on-one to the student by the Reading Recovery teacher during her screening. Some of the sprees were given in the classroom, a print environment, and some in the gym, a print-free environment. A checklist was used by each researcher to record the number of words written by each student (Appendix D).

Each researcher collected grade appropriate artifacts to be used for authentic assessment portfolios. The samples included book making, story sheets, book reports, handwriting samples, and creative writing. Some artifacts had student self-assessments accompanying them. The growth of a child is shown within the portfolio from the beginning of the school year to the present. The portfolio system stimulated more student interest in their own academic growth, than the results of standardized testing. In order to assess the students' growth, each researcher administered a cumulative portfolio self-assessment at the end of the intervention. (Appendix E)

According to the terminal objective, a checklist of the reading and writing inventory was given to the sample of students. Each researcher gave the inventory to four students, a high academically achieving male and female, and a low academically achieving male and female. The researchers felt it was time consuming and unfair to the rest of class to deal only with these four selected students. Each researcher deviated from these inventories and replaced it with the student surveys, thus checking the improvement of the entire class in a fair and equitable manner. The student attitude survey was given by each researcher at the beginning and ending of the intervention. (Appendices B and C.)

For School A, the implementation of the pair and share reading necessitated that social skills were taught and reinforced. The social skills were to sit knee to knee, and to use six inch voices. These were modeled by first grade volunteers and then practiced by the entire class. Students were reading in pairs twice a week from the very beginning. The key to reinforcing the correct modeled behaviors was that the teacher continuously monitored their behavior, praising students for doing it correctly and then giving them a sticker every time the teacher passed by and they were reading in pairs. Throughout the

intervention, students continued to read in pairs twice a week, using the basal readers. By the second quarter, students were also reading independently from library books, classroom supplements, and trade books. By January, students were using 30 minutes of self-selected reading time, and could choose one book to save for the next day.

Many books were made available in the classroom for students to read. The teacher collected books from the school and area library around the themes being studying. "Commercials" were done for books, and the Scholastic reading club was promoted. During Open House, the importance of ordering books monthly was stressed to parents.

During the month of September, two student-made books were developed and sent home. One class book was made about how students come to school. Some other topics throughout the year were autobiographies, a leaf book, apples, spiders (with help from the second grade class), Halloween, Thanksgiving, Indian homes, holiday celebrations, penguins, and bears. Other class books were patterned after literature such as Brown Bear, Brown Bear, by Bill Martin Jr. The beginning books were in language repetitive and were done as a whole group. Then books were written collaboratively with classmates, and finally, students were writing on their own. Clip-art provided a high interest medium for the students to generate stories. The students made at least one book every other week, plus used mini-books from Frank Shaffer and "SchoolDays" magazine.

During the reading basal instruction, Reading Recovery strategy of book introductions were used prior to the students reading the story. It gave meaning, a context, and purpose before they attempted to read. It made students feel more confident and secure when starting to read. Picture clues were also a main strategy implemented at the beginning of reading. Reading

Recovery also uses many other strategies for decoding unknown words, which were taught within the first month of school. The program's philosophy of finding student's known words and building upon it was a driving force behind School A's implementation of the program.

When the first basal reader was finished, a running record was given to each individual child. Running records are a Reading Recovery measurement that evaluates students' level of reading accuracy. Once the Holt Level 3 was finished, these books were sent home for reading practice in vocabulary and fluency. All but one book were returned. In November, the students earned an ice cream party for their good behavior. A Reading Recovery book, The Scrumptious Sundae, was sent home for each student to read. Not all the books were returned, therefore, Reading Recovery books were not sent out of the school again. Multiple copies of books were made available to students inside the classroom. These were purchased by the state money for each first grade class in School A.

School District AB provides resource people to run copies and make class materials. Researcher A had bound 50 pages into books with plastic binders. These books were used for shared writing experiences and also for the writing sprees.

Shared writing experiences were employed instead of journal writing. One student in the class would generate the sentence after a discussion. The sentence would be repeated multiple times before taking it to the print. In October, shared writing continued once a week. During fire prevention week, the firemen, the trucks, and the mascot visited the school, providing experience for another class book, plus a topic for shared writing experience. The Reading Recovery strategies for using sound boxes were implemented. Shared writing continued at least once a week.

In mid-September, the first class writing spree was completed in the classroom. Many students used words from around the room, therefore, not given in a print-free environment. The information was recorded on a class list checklist and kept in a black three-ring binder. A writing spree was completed every month, following the Reading Recovery strategies of administration. The last two writing sprees were done in the gymnasium, when it was not in use. This was helpful to see the amount of growth by each student. At the beginning of the school year, it was important to give the writing spree in a print environment, to note which students were aware of print in their surroundings. Both environments gave information and were valid testing places.

The writing portfolio was a work in progress. The plastic tub had a manilla and red folder for each child, the first folder was for language arts material, and the latter was for math and all other subjects. During the entire intervention, the materials were all teacher-selected. A beginning writing sample with the child's first and last name written four times was collected. The first book written, "About Me", was also collected in each folder. Most of the books made by students were sent home, just a few were saved in the portfolio.

The implementations within School B followed the action plan closely with few deviations. Each month the students wrote a report on a teacher selected topic. The topics included the various genres of literature, for example, fiction, non-fiction, biography, and poetry. At the beginning of each month, the teacher introduced the topic for the month, then the students needed to choose a book within that specific genre. Within a month, the students needed to produce a written report, using a format provided by the teacher (Appendix F). The format included such things as characters, setting, synopsis of the book, and the main idea. The students were also required to make a visual aid which would accompany the written report. The visual aid could range from an artifact

from the book to an original poster drawing. At a selected time given by the teacher, the students would present their report orally while the visual aid helped the audience relate to each oral report. The teacher provided some examples of books that would be acceptable, as well as the school librarian focusing on the specific genre within the library. While each student presented his/her oral report, the teacher evaluated using a teacher-made checklist. A rubric of this evaluation was sent home with each student, while the written report was placed in his/her portfolio.

Another implementation within School B included D.E.A.R. (Drop everything and read) time. Each week, the teacher provided a fifteen minute allotment for students to read whatever reading material they wished to enjoy. Students chose such things as books, magazines, and textbooks. While the students read, the teacher modeled silent reading with personal reading material. The teacher also observed the students to ensure the students were staying on task for this length of time. The teacher did not use a checklist to record on-task behavior. The teacher wanted to model positive reading habits, therefore, the teacher did not want to spend time using a checklist. To aid the students with both book reports and D.E.A.R. time, library trips were made weekly. Each visit to the library allowed the students to check out two books per week, providing they returned their books from the previous week. A trip to the community library was not feasible during the time of this implementation. School B is located within a one mile radius of the public, community library. All trips to the library are to be conducted by walking. The weather during this project was not conducive to walking to the library, therefore, no community library trips were made at this time. However, the students have expressed to the teacher that since they live in the neighborhood within walking distance from their homes, they frequent the library outside of school time.

The previous activities dealt with reading, with the exception of the book reports. The students also performed various writing samples to coincide with the reading activities. Portfolios housed for all the reading and writing activities that the students accomplished throughout this intervention. Hanging folders were given to each student to hold the teacher-selected and student-selected work. Each artifact that was placed into the portfolio was dated and assessed. During this five month intervention, the students occassionally looked through their portfolio. The teacher asked the students verbally what they thought about their portfolio. This enabled the teacher to assess what the students felt about their work in progress. At the end of the intervention, the students were asked to write about their favorite artifact found in the portfolio. These writings were read by the teacher, then passed along to the parents during parent-teacher conferences.

Journal writing was an aspect of the student's writing program. Each week, the students were given time to reflect in their journal. At the beginning of the intervention, 15 - 20 minutes were allotted for writing, however, as the intervention progressed, the students were writing longer than the 20 minute time period. The students reflected on topics provided by the teacher. These topics included story starters, personal feelings, and free writing time. These journal entries, which were kept in a notebook, were read by peers and the teacher. Time was also given to those who volunteered to read their entries to the class. Not only did the students write in their journals once a week, but they also wrote letters in their notebooks once a week. These letters were written to their parents explaining any upcoming events in the school or classroom and any additional reflections from the activities they accomplished throughout the week. The letters were aided by the teacher at first, but eventually the total responsibility for writing to their parents was given to the students. These

notebooks were to be returned to school the next school day, signed by a parent or guardian. The parents were encouraged to write a response to their child's letter. This allowed for parent-student communications, as well as parent-teacher communications.

The final implementation within School B was the use of technology. The students used the computer for language, math, reading, and writing enrichment. The students used a writing and publishing program to enhance their writing skills. After they wrote a story or a letter, they were able to type it into the computer and print the final copy. The Writing-to-Write program, as explained in the action plan, was tried but was unsuccessful. This program was a new piece of software to the teacher, therefore a lot of misunderstandings occurred throughout the intervention. For example, the software was too complicated for the students to understand, and the program was too time-consuming for the teacher to make it succeed. It was to become an enrichment to the existing program, but it soon became the total program. Other elements of the reading and writing curriculum were being left out that the teacher felt were too important to disregard.

In the fall of 1995, School C Researcher added over 50 books to the classroom library. Books were purchased through garage sales and through book orders. The total books purchased were well over 650. The classroom library was also increased by a donation of 80 Highlights magazines. Also, School District C adopted a new literature based reading program that included 350 trade book readers at the early pre-primer and primer level. These books enhanced the use of high-frequency words and phonics skills and supplemented the literature based stories within the series.

The class was assigned a reading partner the first week of September and kept the partner for the month. Each month thereafter, different partners

were assigned. Social skills were taught directly while the students were with their partner. Social skills included using six inch voices, sitting knee to knee, listening and finger pointing to what was heard, and quiet walking movements within the room (Appendix G). Researcher C implemented this technique of pair and share reading bi-weekly in September. The students would pick out a book and then find a quiet spot within the room and read with their partner. Original plans called for 15 minutes per session, but this was too long for the students. The sessions were cut back to 10 minutes and slowly worked up to 15 minutes by December.

In the fall, the students received a half hour to visit the school library. During each visit, they were able to check out books and enjoy story time. They were allowed to keep the books for one week. They were encouraged to use these books for the book reports completed within the classroom. Researcher C constructed a parent letter explaining the book report form and requirements. The teacher duplicated the book report forms and parent verification forms to be sent with each student for the five months during the implementation of this project (Appendices H and I). The written book reports began in October and continued through the end of February. Each student and/or parent read four books per month. Then the student was asked to fill out a book report form stating the title and author of the book. Each student was asked to draw a picture illustrating a particular event from the book to accompany each report. To verify that each student met the requirements of the book report, a parent signature was required when the report was turned in to the teacher. Upon receiving the reports, the teacher would place a sticker by the name of each student who turned in the report on the laminated poster made by the teacher. The students were given reminder notices during the third week of each month. When the students turned in their reports in to the teacher each month, they had

the opportunity to present a book talk to the class. At the end of the five months, students who completed the book reports four out of the five months were treated to a pizza party and given book marks provided by the teacher.

Researcher C began class book making in September. During a one hour writing workshop session, each student developed a picture and wrote a response to the class prompt. Each students' page was assembled into one of two traveling books. The students had the opportunity to take the book home for a few days. The parents were asked to give their comments on the last page of the book. When the creative books were returned, the responses were read to the class to ensure writing for a purpose.

Within School C, journal writing began in the first week of September. The class would occasionally copy a poem related to the class units of study, or they wrote a week's reflection on school activities conducted that week. The teacher modeled the journal writing on the board and the class would come up with the story. Slowly the students began to write their own unique entries using inventive spelling. The last quarter of the school year will consist of all independent entries. Each month the students assessed the entries, then the teacher looked for improvement in their writing skills (Appendix J).

The final implementation for School C , a program called I Can Write All Through the Year, was not completely mastered. Researcher C purchased the book with the aspirations that all the ideas would become beneficial in the classroom. However, a new reading series adopted by the school district applied the same or similar strategies mentioned in the book. The researcher implemented the strategies that were successful and within the time limits of the school day.

Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to assess the effects of students' known words, a monthly tally of known words were recorded throughout the intervention. These data are presented in Figure 15.

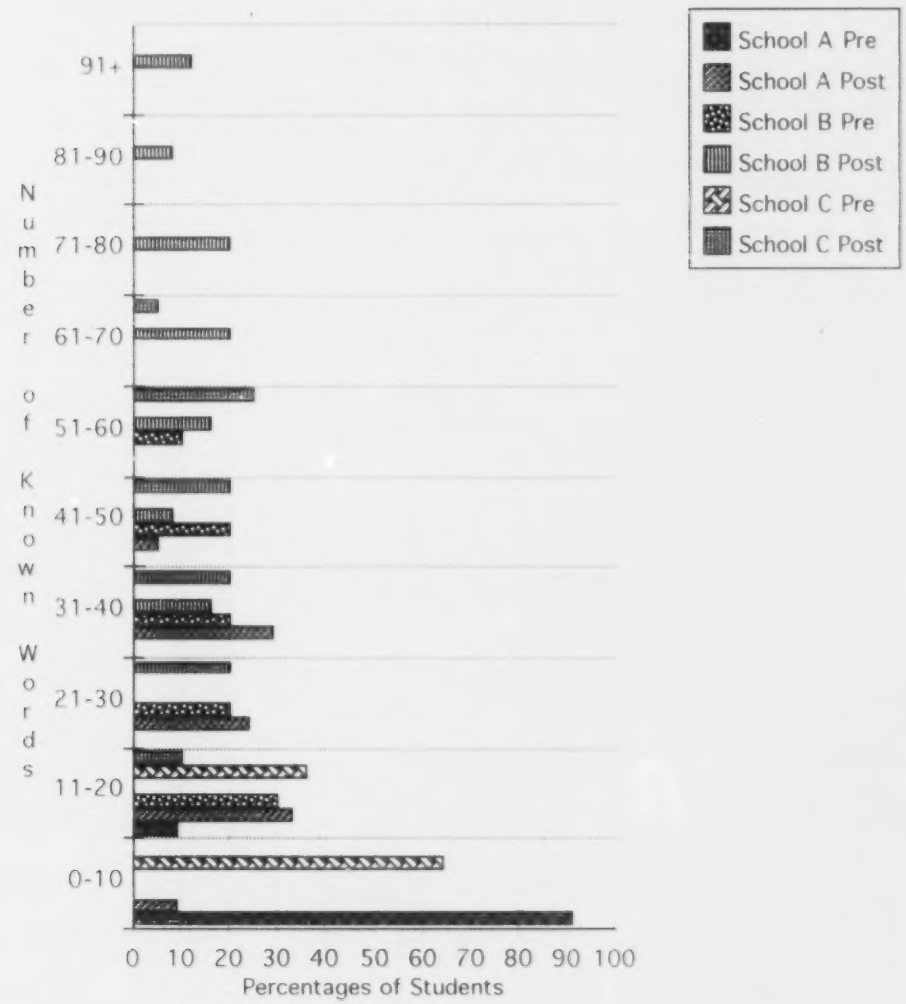

Figure 15
Writing Spree - Pre and Post Intervention Data
Percentage of Students' Known Words
September 1, 1995 and January 31, 1996

The intervention appears to have an positive effect on the increasing the number of words students know. The majority of students from School A

improved from 10 or less known words to over 21 known words, thus doubling the majority's written vocabulary. The other first grade class' ability to write words increased dramatically since over 90 percent of the students are no longer in the 0 to 20 range. Similarly, School B had improvement. The majority of the students generated 61 words or more, which is greater than the highest score from the beginning of the intervention. At School B, 40 percent of the students scored in the lowest category, and at the end of the intervention, only 16 percent were there. The lowest third of the students of School B were in the 10 to 20 range. The lowest third ended with the range of of 31 to 61 words. Now, there is a third who can generate 60 known words. The results are now evenly distributed between 30 and 120 known words. Before the intervention, third graders' results resembled a bell curve. School A students' ending results were in the traditional bell shaped curve. In each researchers' study, the extreme results were indicative of the low and high achieving readers, including School C's non-English speaking students.

The post-intervention portfolio assessment indicates an overall success throughout the three researched schools. The combined results are shown clearly through the following pie charts.

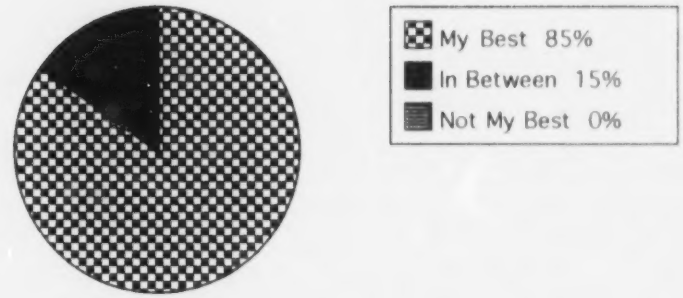

Figure 16
Portfolio Assessment - "I feel my effort with my portfolio is..."
Percentage of Students' Response
January 31, 1996

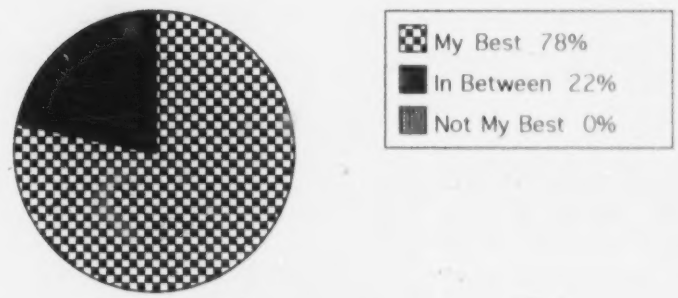

Figure 17
Portfolio Assessment - "The amount of thinking I've done in this portfolio..."
Percentage of Students' Response
January 31, 1996

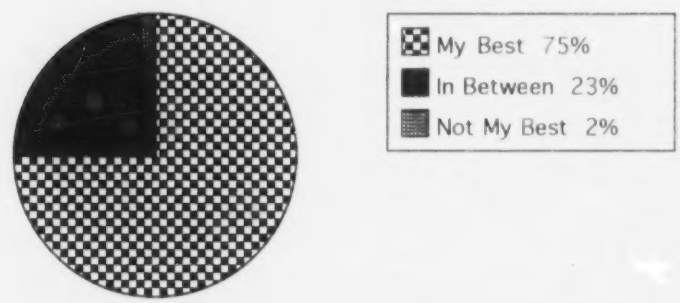

Figure 18
Portfolio Assessment - "The overall rating of this finished portfolio is..."
Percentage of Students' Response
January 31, 1996

The majority of the students felt their work reflected their best effort. Over three-fourths of the the students rated their amount of thinking at the highest level. One-fourth felt that they could have produced more artifacts with higher cognitive levels. Exactly three-fourths of students gave their entire portfolio an outstanding rating. A discrepancy showed up between the students' self-evaluation of effort and quality. The comparison of the majority ratings differed by 10 percent. In looking at the categories of best effort and total quality, this may suggest that student perception signified that their work could have been improved upon.

To determine the success of the interventions, an attitude survey was administered to the students, assessing their opinions about their own reading and writing. These data were collected in a pre and post assessment and are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Percentage of Students' Attitude toward Reading
September 19, 1995 through January 31, 1996

My Reading	Yes		No		Maybe	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1. I like to read.	69	78	16	10	15	12
2. I like my parents and teacher to read to me.	79	78	11	4	10	18
3. I have a favorite author.	60	61	20	22	20	17
4. I go to the library.	67	73	13	9	20	18
5. I think reading is important.	67	87	13	4	20	9
6. I have books of my own at home.	84	79	6	6	10	15
7. I like to tell others about the books I read.	48	52	16	15	36	33

The intervention appears to have had a positive effect on all targeted students. Students' attitudes towards reading greatly improved since the

beginning of the intervention. The number of students who thought reading was important increased by 20 percent; their negative response decreased and their indifference also dramatically dropped. The percentage of students who report going to the library is related to the percentage who report that reading is important. The number of students who indicate a positive attitude about reading has increased, suggesting the intervention was successful.

To determine the success of the interventions, an attitude survey was administered to the students assessing their opinions about their own writing. These data were collected in a pre and post assessment and are presented in Table 4.

Table 4
Percentage of Students' Attitude toward Writing
September 19, 1995 through January 31, 1996

My Writing	Yes		No		Maybe	
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post
1. I like to write.	67	64	11	13	22	23
2. I like to publish my writing.	48	70	22	3	30	27
3. I am a real author.	60	55	16	22	24	23
4. I like to sit on the author's chair and share my writing.	68	53	14	16	18	31
5. My family likes to read my books.	76	64	8	13	16	23
6. Kids in our class help me write.	51	63	33	18	16	19

The final analysis deals with students' attitude regarding their own writing. The most significant change between the pre and post information occurred in their attitude towards publishing their own writing. More than one-fifth of all students expressed enjoyment with publishing their writing. In contrast, it is interesting to note that the fewest number of student responses

was in the category of not liking to publish their writing. Another positive change was student perception of others cooperating in their writing attempts in the classroom. Another significant difference between the pre and post data dealt with question 3, "I am a real author." It is the researchers' opinion that the students are becoming more aware of prominent authors. This may have made it difficult for them to identify themselves as a "real author." The students may have had a different interpretation of the question after the intervention. The decrease of the family interest in student created writing may be due to increase in the number of students with more independent literacy behaviors. Overall, the positive responses to the writing attitude survey decreased since the beginning of the intervention. The researchers note that the writing takes a great deal of effort, and the process of writing appears to not be enjoyable for students. Yet, of all the data collected, the largest discrepancy in pre and post responses is in the enjoyment of the completed written product.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on reading and writing interventions, the students showed a marked improvement in reading and writing success. The reading skills learned during writing activities appear to have transferred to all areas of literacy growth. The amount of growth documented in students' writing vocabulary was increased in substantial proportions.

Students' level of confidence in reading increased, along with the number of strategies students used to decode the written language. Many of the students within the targeted classrooms flourished into independent readers and writers. Within the cooperative setting, students also encouraged each other with their writing and became a support system for each other. Due to the

interventions created by the researchers, students experienced more meaningful writing activities, and displayed more control over their own finished products. Because of students' published writing, the purpose of writing has surfaced and then motivated students to write more. Likewise, the usage of authentic literature established a purpose for reading, and also motivated independent reading and writing.

The researchers agree that the word sprees were beneficial. Students written progress could be easily noted over time, and they could self-reflect over their own vocabulary. Another valid aspect of the intervention was the sustained silent reading and shared reading experience. Students were highly motivated to read and share their literature with one another. The last significant intervention the researchers agreed upon was the writing portfolio. The students' portfolios made them proud of their work and showed them their growth since the beginning of the year. The use of the portfolio was time consumming, yet the researchers believe that, over time, a portfolio system is valid and worthwhile. An improvement with the portfolio system would be to increase the amount of publishing.

According to the researchers, book making and book reports were a successful component of the intervention. This intervention provided the student with a format to share and listen to other students' writings. Some students were able to share their writing with their parents. A recommendation would be to provide more communication with the students' home life. One of the researchers did not fully implement book reports due to a time factor, and will implement it for next year.

The researchers of the first grade classes modified the journal writing to be a whole class writing lesson. As the students' developmental levels increase, authentic journal writing can happen with their own skill growth.

Due to the decrease in the number of responses from students about their family liking to read their stories, the researchers advocate more parent education about literacy development in children. Some topics to address are: inventive spelling, the availability of reading and writing materials, the developmental stages of literacy, decoding strategies other than phonics, as well as, developing a conducive literacy environment. Having the parents become more knowlegdeable about the relationship between reading and writing, will encourage their children to become literate naturally.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Parent Survey

Please take a few minutes to fill out the following survey.

1. Do you read to your child at home? _____ If so, how much time do you spend in minutes per day?

0-5 5-10 10-15 15 +

2. Does your child read independently? _____ If so, how much time does your child spend per week?

0-10 10-20 20-30 30 +

3. Estimate the number of children's books at home.

0-10 10-20 20-30 30 +

4. What types of materials do you read?

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

5. Do you go to the library and check out books? _____ If so, how often? (Please circle)

Weekly Bi-Monthly Monthly Other _____

Which of the following do you have in your home? (Please circle)

Television Electronic Games VCR Computer Board Games

Appendix B

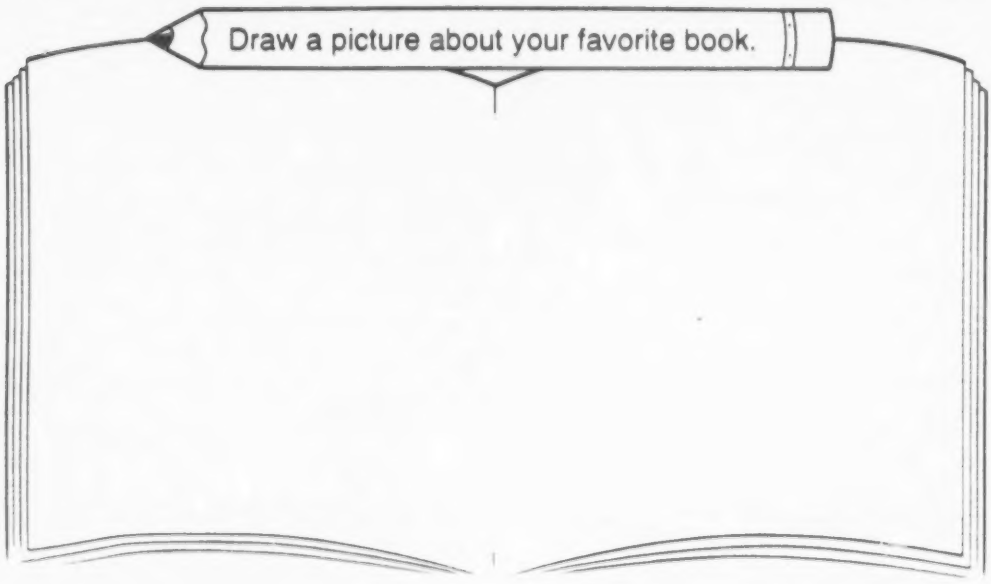
Student Reading Survey

My Reading

Name:_____ Date:_____

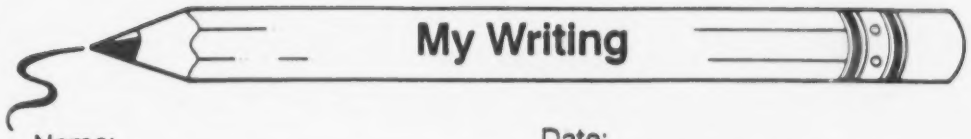
Circle your answer:

1. I like to read.	YES	NO	MAYBE
2. I like my parents and teacher to read to me.	YES	NO	MAYBE
3. I have a favorite author.	YES	NO	MAYBE
4. I go to the library.	YES	NO	MAYBE
5. I think reading is important.	YES	NO	MAYBE
6. I have books of my own at home.	YES	NO	MAYBE
7. I like to tell others about the books I read.	YES	NO	MAYBE



Appendix C

Student Writing Survey



My Writing

Name: _____ Date: _____

Circle your answer:

1. I like to write.	YES	NO	MAYBE
2. I like to publish my writing.	YES	NO	MAYBE
3. I am a real author.	YES	NO	MAYBE
4. I like to sit on the author's chair and share my writing.	YES	NO	MAYBE
5. My family likes to read my books.	YES	NO	MAYBE
6. Kids in our class help me write.	YES	NO	MAYBE

7. The hardest thing about writing is . . .

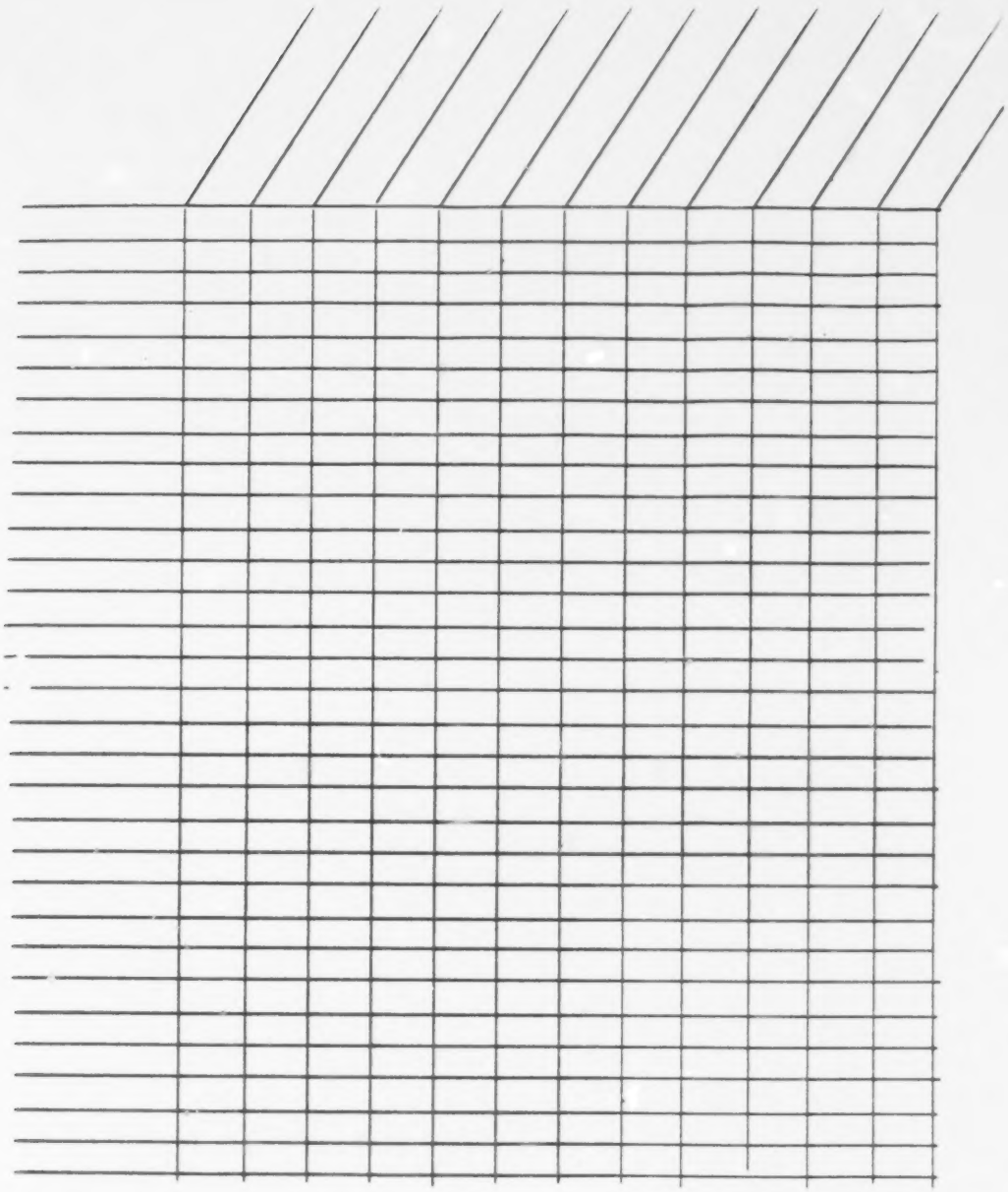
_____

_____

Here's a sample of my writing

Appendix D

Writing Spree Checklist



Appendix E

Portfolio Assessment

Portfolio Assessment

Portfolios are collections of papers written over a period of time that represent the investment of time, ownership, and response in a student's work.

Name _____

1. I feel my effort with my portfolio is...

2. The amount of thinking I have done in this portfolio...

3. The overall rating of this finished portfolio is...

Appendix F

Third Grade Book Report Form

BOOK REPORT

TITLE:_____

AUTHOR:_____

MAIN CHARACTERS:_____

_____

SETTING:_____

SYNOPSIS:_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

MAIN IDEA:_____

Appendix G

Pair and Share Reading Checklist

PAIR AND SHARE READING CHECKLIST

\- Beginning ✓ Developing \+ Proficient

	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
1. Choose a book quickly	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -
2. Sit knee to knee	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -
3. Uses 6" voices	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -
4. Sits quietly	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -
5. Reads independently	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -
5. Listens to partner read	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -

NAME: _____

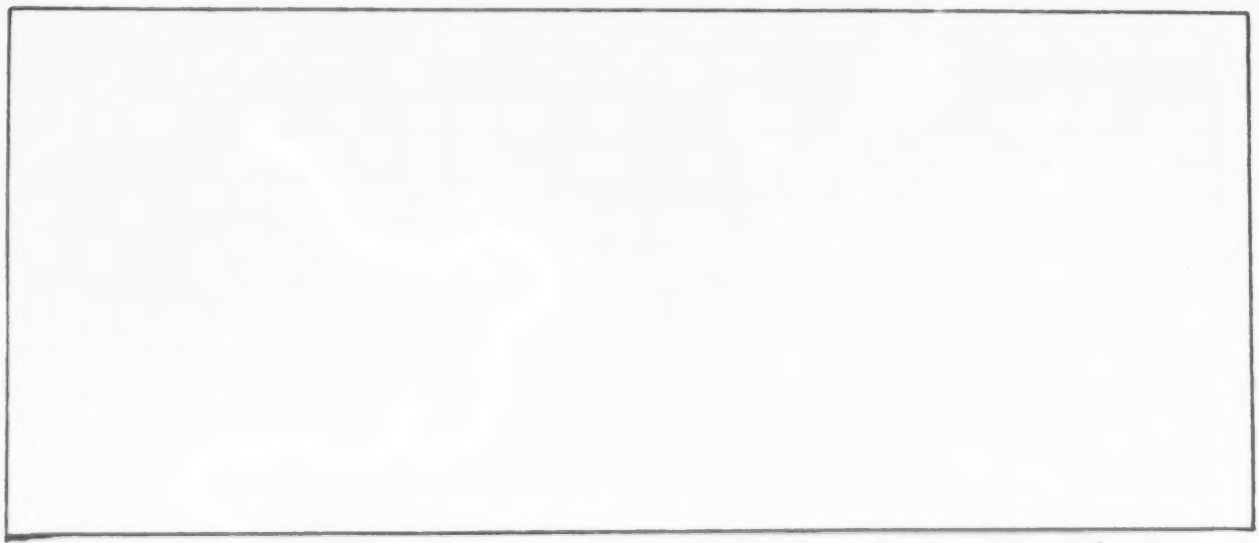
Appendix H

First Grade Book Report Form

Your Name _____

Name of Book _____

Author _____



Draw a picture that tells something about the story.

Appendix I

Parent Verification Reading Form

PARENT READING VERIFICATION FORM

Please fill out a verification slip each time your child has completed a reading assignment for the BOOK IT!® program. Return the slip to your child's teacher.

I VERIFY THAT _____ READ _____
Name of Child *Title of Book or Reading Assignment*

BY _____ SIGNED _____ DATE _____
Name of Reader *Signature of Parent*

I VERIFY THAT _____ READ _____
Name of Child *Title of Book or Reading Assignment*

BY _____ SIGNED _____ DATE _____
Name of Reader *Signature of Parent*

I VERIFY THAT _____ READ _____
Name of Child *Title of Book or Reading Assignment*

BY _____ SIGNED _____ DATE _____
Name of Reader *Signature of Parent*

I VERIFY THAT _____ READ _____
Name of Child *Title of Book or Reading Assignment*

BY _____ SIGNED _____ DATE _____
Name of Reader *Signature of Parent*

I VERIFY THAT _____ READ _____
Name of Child *Title of Book or Reading Assignment*

BY _____ SIGNED _____ DATE _____
Name of Reader *Signature of Parent*

I VERIFY THAT _____ READ _____
Name of Child *Title of Book or Reading Assignment*

BY _____ SIGNED _____ DATE _____
Name of Reader *Signature of Parent*

The BOOK IT! National Reading Incentive Program

The BOOK IT! National Reading Incentive Program is sponsored by Pizza Hut, Inc. Address: The BOOK IT! Program, P.O. Box 2999, Wichita, KS 67201

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Appendix J

Journal Assessment

Name _____

1. I feel my effort is...

2. The amount of thinking I've done on this assignment...

3. The overall rating of this finished project is....

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